

Washington, DC – U.S. Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) voted Thursday to preserve access to healthcare for America's seniors by changing the way Medicare pays physicians for their services.

H.R. 3961 – the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act – repeals a 21 percent cut in payments to doctors scheduled to go into effect in January. The bill, passed 243 to 183, will reform the way Medicare pays doctors, allowing them to better provide healthcare services to seniors.

"Our seniors deserve access to quality care, but that care is at risk when medical providers can't afford to continue seeing patients," Congressman Rodriguez said. "This bill fixes a broken system and allows doctors to keep providing necessary services to one of our most vulnerable populations."

The bill passed Thursday will make this change permanent, doing away with the yearly overrides that Congress has enacted six times before. Coupled with the recently passed Affordable Health Care for America Act, H.R. 3961 will ensure that seniors pay lower premiums, get expanded primary and preventive care and don't fall through the drug coverage gap known as the "doughnut hole." Because physician payment rates for TRICARE are tied to Medicare rates, the bill will also benefit members of the military and their families.

"At a time when our families are suffering through a difficult economic time, this bill helps preserve the payment system for doctors and keep quality services available for our seniors and military families," Congressman Rodriguez said.